1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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hundreds of Mallams of the lower grade, there are few real scholars, and they are well known and highly esteemed. These scholars will occupy that most influential position which a Mohammedan culture accords to the men of learning.[1] Their advice will be sought by friends and strangers, in matters spiritual or profane.[2] The important political and religious offices of judge, scribe, and Imam at the town mosque are open to them. Some become attached to a noble household as 'private chaplain'. Royal princes and noblemen will seek their friendship, give them their daughters in marriage without bride-price, regarding marriage with a Mallam as *sádaka*, pious alms. Such is, the Nupe say, the *cimwa katũ*, the Greatness of Learning. To some extent, however, the high reputation of the learned profession is reflected also in the persons of lesser erudition. Learning is, after all, relative. And a Mallam of very inferior scholarship judged by Bida standards, may be revered as a fount of knowledge in a small half-pagan village. These Mallams in the villages are frequently supported by the people and receive annual gifts of crops as *dzankâ*, tithe.

The Mallams are, above all, teachers. They teach both children and adults, the former the Koran and the latter 'knowledge'. Every Mallam may, besides, be called in to perform a marriage ceremony or to officiate at a funeral—services for which they are remunerated according to their status and reputation. A few are well-to-do and own land, which is worked by their sons and pupils or, in some cases, by wage-labour. But most Mallams practise, in addition to teaching, some other occupation, which may or may not be associated with their scholarly profession, to supplement the meagre income of a Koran teacher. Some write out and illuminate pages of the Koran, or copy Arabic manuscripts, for sale. You can buy a sheet of this sort, very beautifully illuminated, for 5*d*. on the Bida market; more ambitious scribes would sell a whole copy of the Koran and receive for it—the work of five months—£1. Students of 'knowledge' eagerly buy these copies and use them in their studies. Other Mallams, again, embroider gowns, make straw hats or saddle-cloths, or do tailoring.

The size and standard of the Koran schools varies as widely as the status and standard of learning of the Mallams. You find 'schools' with two little boys for pupils, and these close relations of the teacher; and you find others—the schools of famous Bida scholars—the classrooms of which (as a rule the *katamba* in the Mallam's house) are crowded with pupils. The teachers are very jealous of the reputation of their school. When I was a regular visitor to Bida Koran schools the Mallam of one which I had not yet visited came to me complaining that I had left out his school, and quoted as reference a Bida Mallam of very high standing who was a special friend of mine. In the large Koran schools the Mallam himself teaches only the adult students of 'knowledge', while the elementary teaching is carried out by his sons or certain advanced pupils.

[1] Bida learning has a great reputation even outside Nupe; Mallams from Bida have been given important posts in other countries, and several Bida Koran teachers have established flourishing schools in Ilorin.

[2] One aspect of this spiritual advice is divining, which, as we have seen, plays an important part even in such political activities as the election of a high officer of state or the preparation for war.

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II

DIVINATION

787 WE shall deal with two methods of divination, both of which are known throughout the country and applied on all occasions, trivial as well as serious. The first, called *eba*, consists in throwing strings of shells and resembles in technique the *ifa* divination of Yoruba; the second, *hati*, is of Mohammedan origin and involves drawing mystic patterns in the sand.[1] The two methods appeal to a somewhat different public, the former being practised mainly in the villages and pagan districts, the latter in the sophisticated capital, Bida. The division, however, is far from rigid; also, as we shall see, the two methods share certain essential features in spite of the difference in technique and religious background.

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Two other types of divination, which are used infrequently and mainly on minor matters, and which are known only in the river area, may be disregarded. One, called *evo* ('cowrie shells'), is a simplified version of the method of *eba*. The other, called *kpápagi* ('tortoise'), employs the dried, hollowed-out body of a tortoise, which is made to slide down a taut string. This is a crude oracle, permitting only three answers—'yes' (if the tortoise glides down quickly), 'no' (if it does not glide down at all), and 'doubtful' (if it glides down slowly).

I. THE MECHANICS OF EBA

787 791 The method of *eba* is far from uniform. Although the divining apparatus itself and the principles of interpretation are the same everywhere, the 'key' used by the diviner, his invocations, and his minor paraphernalia may differ from locality to locality, even from one person to the other. This scope for variety does not extend to the attitude assumed in the act of divining. The eight men I observed all went through their act in a serious and tense mood, their gestures and utterances from time to time rising to an excitement which lent to the proceedings a thoroughly dramatic atmo-

[1] The Nupe term *hati* appears to be a corruption of the Arabic *hatim* 'seal', 'magic square'; cf. the corresponding Hausa term *hatimi*.

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sphere. One diviner, indeed, behaved in an almost hysterical manner. The clients in turn were shy, spoke little, and behaved in the presence of the diviner with the same visible restraint and, occasionally, awe which the Nupe bring to the esoteric part of a religious ceremony.

The diviner's apparatus includes two sets of objects, the divining strings themselves, and a series of marked slabs which serve as the 'key' for interpreting the throws. The former consist of eight cords of hemp, each strung through four perforated, hollow half-shells, placed equidistantly along the cord, about three inches from one another. The cords end in four strands, covered with small rings made of hollowed-out berries and cowrie shells; these cord-ends have no importance in the actual divining, being merely ornamental tassels, though it seems significant that they are again four (or eight) in number. The divination fastens upon the four half-shells, which are called *kpyekpya* and are made either of the shell of sheanut or of the kernel of the dompalm; in either case the bundle of eight cords is referred to as *vúnkpara*, 'white shell' (of sheanut). The diviner starts the proceedings by placing the eight cords on the ground, in parallel rows and pointing away from him, all shells being turned open side down. He then picks them up at the middle, two at a time, holding one in each hand, and throws them down again, once more in parallel rows. When this has been repeated four times, that is, when all the cords have been picked up and thrown, the diviner will interpret the pattern of shells as they happened to fall, open side up or closed side up. The procedure is called *sa 'ba*, 'to cast the *eba*', or for short, *esa*, 'the casting'. The diviner himself is known, accordingly, as *ebásaci*, 'One who casts the *eba*'.[1] The interpretation of the pattern thrown does not, however, consist merely in counting up the shells, but involves a more complicated calculation which requires certain aids to memory and a definite 'key'.

These are provided in the second set of objects, which is included in the generic name for the whole divining apparatus, *eba*. It consists of eight small, roughly square slabs cut from gourds, each of which bears a different series of point-like marks. The point-designs are known as *emi* or *kata*, that is, 'house', which nomenclature will become clear presently. The diviners employ two further paraphernalia, which play no part in the actual interpretation of the *eba*, a hippopotamus tooth, and a round or wedge-shaped stone about the size of a fist. Throughout the proceedings the diviner will poke the tooth or stone at the divining cords as though he wished to prod them into activity or to aid some process that

[1] The diviner is also called, by the Hausa name, *boka* or (the Nupe-ized version) *boci*.

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787 is going on in them. This act is in fact intended to 'bring out the truth' and to help the shell cords to 'give speech'. The hippopotamus tooth is sometimes replaced by the tooth of a warthog, but no reason can be quoted why it should be one or the other; nor have these two animals any mystic or mythical connotation. The stone, on the other hand, is known as *sokógba* ('stone of God' or 'thunderbolt') and is always claimed to have 'fallen from the sky'; when pressed, however, the diviner will usually admit that he either simply found the stone or obtained it from a friend. Its round shape and smooth surface seem to be the main reasons for the choice, the nature of the stone being unimportant. Several diviners of my acquaintance used ordinary pebbles; one had a piece of quartz, another a piece of iron ore which, I discovered, came from disused iron ore workings in the neighbourhood. The diviner is also free to add to these paraphernalia at his own discretion; one of my diviner friends who had been working, in the conventional manner, with a hippo tooth and stone, had added a chameleon to his apparatus when I visited him after an interval of a few months. He had found the animal in the bush, which meant that it 'must be a gift from *Sokó*', claimed that it understood what he said, and employed it by throwing it from time to time at the divining cords. Judging from the behaviour of the onlookers, he had indeed acquired an impressive and uncanny tool.

The sketch opposite shows four different sets of *eba* slabs used by Nupe diviners. They are numbered from right to left, and are shown in the order and position in which the diviner places them on the ground, with the lower edge towards him. Series (*a*) and (*b*) are used in Bida and the surrounding district, including the Beni village of Doko; series (*d*) comes from another Beni village, Pichi; series (*c*) from Jebba Island.

The fourth slab in each series is sometimes placed face down on the ground, since it indicates misfortunes which the diviner wishes to ignore if not to spirit away. Although the markings differ widely in the four series they are supposed to be merely different versions of the same thing. One diviner used both set (*a*) and (*b*), considering that the latter set was simpler to read', since it showed only the marks that 'counted' and omitted those which had no significance.[1] Equally, the diviners will insist that there is a close correspondence between the markings on the slabs and the patterns of open or closed shells thrown in the strings, and will go to great length to prove it. They would argue, for example, that each pair of holes on the slabs corresponds to one shell thrown open

[1] The same diviner also taught me the art of *eba*. He first used set (*a*) but later brought along the second set, since he 'could see that I found the other too difficult'.

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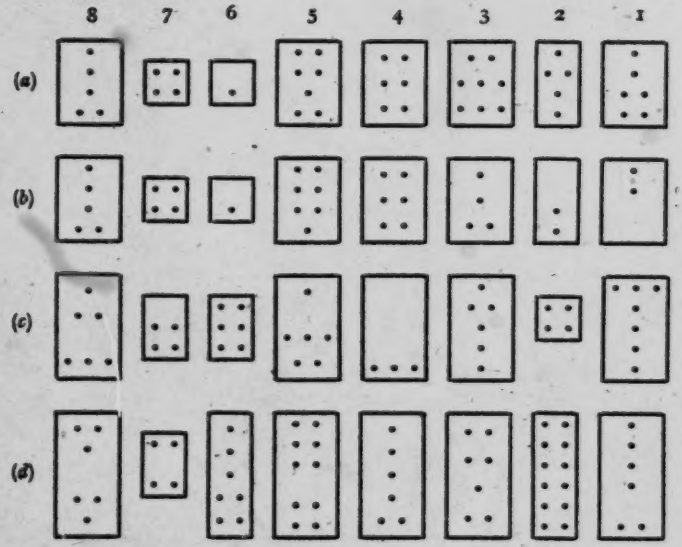
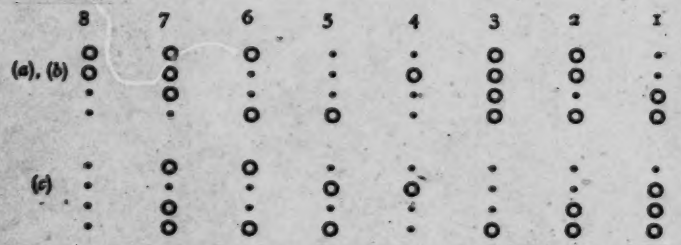
side up, and each single hole to a closed shell; or that only the upper (or lower) halves of the slabs count in this calculation. None of these explanations, however, proves correct; in reality, the markings are entirely irrelevant and cannot even by a *tour de force* be harmonized with the varying combination of open and closed shells. What counts is not the markings on the slab, but the order



of the latter and the significance attached to each of the eight positions in it; for it is this position which is linked (quite arbitrarily) with the various possible 'throws' and gives the 'key' to their meaning. This connection is illustrated, for series (*a*), (*b*), and (*c*), in the diagram below; the position in the series of eight is indicated by the respective numbers; shells falling with the open side up are shown as rings, shells falling with the closed side up, as dots.



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2. NOMENCLATURE AND INCANTATIONS

787 Though the markings on the slabs and the corresponding patterns of open and closed shells vary so widely, the significance attributed to their numerical order and the names given to them in that order are largely identical in all forms of *eba* divinations. To begin with, the shell patterns are called, generically, *etsuži* (sing. *etsu*), that is, 'kings' and are usually referred to by their number in the series, for example, '*etsu* three is a good *etsu*' (i.e. propitious), and so forth. Then there is a name for each 'house', that is, for the position which the slabs or shell patterns occupy in the series of eight. Two names, finally, refer to the slab markings themselves and to the corresponding patterns of open and closed shells. These last two names represent a sort of code, indicating the meaning attributed to the markings and shell patterns. One refers to the upper half of the slab and to the respective shell pattern lying 'straight' (i.e. as shown in our diagram); the other, to the lower half of the slab and to the shell pattern turned upside-down. Normally, only the first 'code' name is quoted; and when any shell pattern appears in reverse it usually changes not only its name but also its meaning, sometimes assuming, by a simple symbolism, the opposite significance.

The eight combinations of open and closed shells shown in our diagram are those the diviner would first demonstrate when explaining the system, the 'standard positions' as it were. But since for each string of four shells there are sixteen different throws, the eight standard positions represent only half the number of possible throws; that number, then, is completed by allowing for the reversal of the 'standard position'. By the same means the diviner can also double the range of his interpretations.

Even so, certain additional rules and provisos must be brought in. Certain slabs, for example, have symmetrical markings, so that their 'upper' and 'lower' halves coincide; in this case the second name, which corresponds to the reversed throw, refers to the (blank) back of the slab. Again, two strings in their standard position—Nos. 6 and 3 in (*a*) and (*b*), and Nos. 8 and 6 in (*c*)—show the same shell pattern when reversed; here the 'reversed pattern' is obtained by counting open shells as closed and *vice versa*. Furthermore, series (*a*) contains among its standard positions two throws (Nos. 1 and 8) which are the reverse of one another; they also have roughly opposite meanings, prophesying good fortune and disaster respectively. Since here one particular combination and its reverse are both included among the eight standard positions, another possible combination of shells must obviously be missing; if this missing combination occurs in a throw

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it remains meaningless in this series. Let me note finally, that not every shell pattern in reverse has a special meaning; in other words, the range of interpretations utilized by the diviner lags behind the mathematical possibilities of his system. 787

We need not point out specially that one series includes among its standard positions throws which do not occur in the other or occur there only in reversed position. It will be agreed, I think, that there is a great deal of arbitrariness and even haphazardness in this system of divination. The cause may well lie in the manner in which the rules of divination have been transmitted from generation to generation or spread from one community to another; this arbitrariness would thus reflect errors in the learning and memory of individuals and perhaps unwitting variations which crept into the practice. As we shall see, the system of divination is in fact taught, learned, and handed on in a purely practical and often fortuitous fashion, with none of the sacred or ritual sanctions which would make for strict adherence to given rules. However this may be, in the following discussion I propose to ignore the different variants and exemplify the method of divination on one series, that marked (*a*) in our list.

These are the names of the eight 'houses' and the 'code names' for the markings and throws, both in 'standard' and 'reversed' position:

	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Name of 'House'	*Kuti*	Road	Man	Woman	House of Diviner	Town	House	*Sokó*
Code name stand. pos.	Crowd	Arab	Wretch	Hole	Offerings	Monkey	Witchcraft	Divination
Code name rev. pos.	Hiding	Wound	Receiving (gifts)	Needle	Danger	Begging	*rusu*	Rain

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787 The translation of the 'code names' entails considerable difficulties since the words are often given an unusual or cryptic meaning; nor can the diviners themselves always state it in more than tentative fashion. The code name for No. 8 in reversed position, for example, is *shikã*, which means normally 'dirt'; but the diviner suggested that in this context the word represents a contraction of two verbs, *shi*, meaning 'to be dark', and *'kã*, to 'hide from sight'. Again, the name for No. 4 in standard position is *nyikã*, 'fish'; but here it is taken to refer, not to the zoological species, but to the ritual offerings of fish. The name *rusu* for No. 2 is altogether untranslatable, though the diviner held (without any etymological evidence) that it meant 'foreknowledge of evil things'. I suspect that much of this is pure speculation, put forth to disprove the apparent arbitrariness of the names. The diviners are certainly convinced that there is a definite logical connection between the names for the 'houses', the code names for throws and markings, and the prophecies based on both, and in order to demonstrate it they will resort to the most far-fetched and circuitous explanations. Here is one such glossary, alleged to prove the connections underlying the threefold terminology.

No. 1: Both divination and rain come from *Sokó*.

No. 2: A house (*emi*) has a family head (*emitsó*), who wields 'power'; witchcraft equally gives power; and people also have foreknowledge of witchcraft (through dreams).

No. 3: The monkey is an animal, that is, one of many; in the 'town' there are many human beings, some of them beggars.

No. 4: The diviner often receives gifts of fish, while his craft entails certain mystic dangers.

No. 5: The 'hole', like the eye of a 'needle', stands for the vagina and hence for 'woman'.

No. 6: The 'man' consulting the diviner is often 'wretched', that is, worried over his possessions; while the prophecy connected with this 'house' bears on personal possessions (i.e. on what one 'receives').

No. 7: 'Arabs' are mostly traders and thus travel on the roads; on the roads, there are also robbers who may attack and wound travellers; thus the prophecies connected with this 'house' bear on trade and highway robbers.

No. 8: At the *kuti* there are 'crowds', and the *kuti* is also 'hidden'.

From the nomenclature we may briefly turn to the incantations which accompany the art of divining. 'Incantation' is not quite the right word; the Nupe speak of *emisa*, which is the term for the set and often elaborate forms of address required by Nupe etiquette.

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Similarly each pattern of shells has its appropriate 'greeting', which the diviner utters when it appears among his 'throws'. Mostly he mumbles it as though speaking to himself, and the listeners cannot possibly catch what he says. Nor could they make much of it even if they were interested (which they are not); for the meaning of these phrases is no less obscure than that of *eba* nomenclature. But now the diviner himself will admit this difficulty. Even my most knowledgeable informants, when trying to explain the *emisa*, gave up after a few attempts, saying that these were 'just greetings', and hence meaningless. Interspersed with meaningless words, however, one usually discovers decipherable phrases, which take the form of proverb-like sayings of nondescript character and of no striking appropriateness. Few of these sayings, incidentally, are today in common use or widely known. Their connection with the names for 'houses' or divining strings, if it exists at all, is vague, often purely verbal, and sometimes quite haphazard; the impression of haphazardness is further strengthened by the considerable diversity that occurs between the sets of *emisa* used by different diviners. A few examples will illustrate the character of these 'incantations'.

Throw No. 1, standard position: 'Fire of witchcraft, though red, will not burn the house'. This 'greeting' would seem to fit throw No. 2 much better; in another series it is replaced by the altogether cryptic allusion 'The devil is hungry.'

Throw No. 2, standard position: 'Dampness quietly causes the house to collapse.'

Throw No. 5, standard position: 'A burglar will not fall into a hole, though he may stumble on a slippery place.'

Throw No. 8, standard position: 'A large boat that would go into a narrow creek, you cannot build it: a crowd cannot go into a narrow place.' Replaced in another series by—'When the knees bend, the mouth should not joke' (i.e. you cannot work and play at the same time).

Throw No. 1, reversed position: 'The gown of a poor man will not (by itself) catch indigo; if he pays money, people will dye the gown for him. The poor man who becomes a grave-digger must hang his hoe on his back and walk from house to house' (i.e. even as a grave-digger, a poor devil will have to beg for custom).

Throw No. 2, reversed position: 'The leader who quarrels while pretending he wishes to prevent quarrel (is as bad as) a man who stabs you in the back.'

Throw No. 5, reversed position: 'He can sew but not wear (what he has sewn); when war eats a horse, the vulture is pleased' (which means, 'evil deeds find you out).

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787 Throw No. 8, reversed position: 'A bushfowl breaks away from the birdlime; the only thing for it to do is to run fast' (and hide).

3. INTERPRETATION

We have, so far, been dealing only with the preliminaries of divination; this obviously consists in more than reciting the names for the 'houses' and divining strings or in knowing the appropriate formulæ of address. Nor is the diviner's skill exhausted when he is able to interpret the shell patterns in their fixed numerical order, rather is this only the first step. This order (illustrated in our diagram) shows each possible shell pattern in its appropriate place or, as the Nupe would say, 'each king in his own house'. It represents a model or 'key' series, on the basis of which the diviner must compute the meaning of the actual throws. These, of course, may fall anyhow, so that any one of the eight cords may show any one of the sixteen possible shell patterns; in other words, a particular shell pattern may appear in a 'house' other than its 'own'. The main problem of the diviner, therefore, is to interpret these irregular, transposed, throws, and it is here that the series of slabs acts as an aid to memory; for having the slabs before him in their fixed numerical order the diviner is kept aware of his 'key'. To quote one diviner: To know the names and 'greetings' and to interpret the throws 'in their own house' is easy—only a matter of 'remembering'; what is difficult and demands a 'good head' is 'to know the speech of the cords when they fall in a strange house'.

I have called this part of divining a computation; for such in essence it is. The diviner knows the meaning of the various places in the series of eight; he also knows the meaning of each possible shell pattern in the key series. In divining any actual throw he considers the juxtaposition of place and shell pattern, and arrives at an interpretation combining in some reasonable fashion the two meanings. If, for example, shell pattern No. 3, which, in the key series, means 'fortune', occurred in the seventh cord (or 'house'), which has the meaning 'road', then the diviner would argue that the actual throw must mean 'fortune acquired on the road', that is, in travel or trade. It is not easy to say how far the diviner reasons anew in this fashion every time he interprets an actual throw, or merely follows some remembered rule governing this and all other possible permutations. It is most unlikely, however, that he relies on remembered rules alone, since these would have to be far too numerous.[1] When demonstrating the system of divination for my benefit the diviners did in fact cite a number of

[1] To cover all possible permutations, there would have to be 112 such rules, ignoring the 16 rules for interpreting the key series.

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possible permutations with striking readiness, which suggested that they were relying on well-memorized rules. But in the concrete case, when divining for clients, they sometimes arrived at different interpretations for identical throws. Sometimes, too, the diviner would repeat certain throws twice or three times before he seemed satisfied. The reasons for doing so were explained to me by this analogy: 'When you are told something important once only, do you believe it? No—you would wish to hear it twice or three times before you are satisfied that it is the truth. Similarly you must consult the cords several times.' But I suspect that by means of this repetition the diviner merely tries to obtain an arrangement he can more readily interpret. I would conclude, therefore, that the diviner relies on a number of remembered rules, covering certain set permutations, and interprets all others by *ad hoc* reasoning. In either case, he would also be guided by the questions put to him by his clients and by such knowledge as he happens to have of his clients, their interests, and the like.

To some extent, this kind of guidance is fully admitted; for in actual divining the different 'houses' and shell patterns vary in relevance according to the nature of the questions put by the client and the interests he is likely to have. When dealing with a trader, for example, the 'house' called 'road' will be the most important; in the case of a person concerned about the birth of a child 'house' No. 5 ('women') and shell pattern No. 2 (referring to fortunes or misfortunes befalling a family head) will be the most significant. Furthermore, the timing of the prophecies differs for the different shell patterns. The first three shell patterns have unlimited validity, bearing on the near as well as distant future; the prophecy of shell pattern No. 4 includes only the actual day of the divination, shell pattern No. 5, the next two days, shell pattern No. 6, an indefinite future, and shell patterns Nos. 7 and 8, the near future. The interest of the diviner in all the possible throws is thus narrowed down, and he will in fact acclaim the appearance of the relevant throws with much aplomb, while lightly passing over all others.

I have listed below all the interpretations referring to throws in the 'key' position and a number of interpretations of 'transposed' throws. The list is based on 'key' series (*a*), which I recorded in Bida.

Key position

Shell pattern 1—A great man, someone well known in the town, will die. Reversed—The nobility will be angry with the White Man.

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787 Shell pattern 2—Some misfortune will befall the family head. Reversed—The family head will acquire greatness.

Shell pattern 3—Smallpox will visit the town in the rainy season, but there will be no deaths.

Shell pattern 4—The diviner will receive gifts. Reversed—Misfortune will threaten everyone, in the whole country.

Shell pattern 5—The women will quarrel. Reversed—Everyone in the country will enjoy good business; the women will have children.

Shell pattern 6—All the men (not the women) of the town will have grounds for distress, for example, because of the death indicated in shell pattern 1.

Shell pattern 7—Trouble on the highway.

Shell pattern 8—All the important people in the town will be happy.

Transposed position

Pattern 1 in house 2—Happy relations between the nobility and the White Man.

Pattern 1 in house 3—Many deaths.

Pattern 1 in house 5—Refers to menstruation.

Pattern 1 in house 7—There will be fights on the road, possibly death or murder.

Pattern 2 in house 1—Rain will fall; or—Happy relations between the nobility and the White Man.

Pattern 2 in house 4—Many deaths.

Pattern 2 in house 7—Pregnancy.

Pattern 3 in house 4—The diviner will receive a gift of a goat or sheep.

Pattern 3 in house 5—The women will quarrel among themselves.

Pattern 3 in house 6—Highway robbery.

Pattern 3 in house 7—War.

Pattern 4 in house 1—Many deaths.

Pattern 7 in any house other than 5—A guest will arrive.

Pattern 7 reversed in any house—A case of death.

Pattern 7 in house 5—Pregnancy.

Pattern 8 in house 1—There will be greetings and gifts for the nobility.

Pattern 8 in house 2—The client should stay at home and not travel.

Pattern 8 in house 3—Success in trade.

184 787 Let me note that different diviners, using a different key series, will also interpret it somewhat differently. Mostly, this merely means that the interpretations are moved about, from one place

on the list to another, while the list as a whole remains unchanged. Sometimes, however, the lists themselves differ; though these differences are few, they bear relevantly on the social background of the diviner and the interests current in his setting. Thus the diviners in the villages interpret shell pattern 3 as meaning, on occasion, a 'good hunt', which interpretation does not occur at all in the list of the diviners in or near Bida town, where there is no hunting. Again, in the villages shell pattern 8 is sometimes taken to mean 'a council in the house of the chief'; the connection with the 'important people' mentioned in our version is clear; but in that version, coming as it does from the capital where there are no councils of elders or chiefs, the reference to a 'council in the house of the chief' would clearly be out of place. Conversely, shell pattern 1 reversed has in Bida a meaning which hardly affects the life in villages remote from the political difficulties and tensions of the capital; characteristically, in the villages the same pattern reads 'rain will fall', a prophecy which in turn has less importance for the townspeople. In one instance at least—the transposed pattern 2 in 'house' 1—the diviner's key allows for both these interests. I need not point out especially that it allows also for modern conditions and problems of a thoroughly topical kind.

Let me finally quote two examples of complete divinations. The first was performed for a canoe-man who was about to set out on a trip up the river. The cords fell as follows:

Cords	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Shell patterns	6	2 rev.	4	7	3	4	2 rev.	1
Prophecies	The people will foregather	Refers to evening	A pleasant trip	Good trading	The women will pick quarrels	The men will be pleasant	Gifts for the chief	The *kuti* is friendly

The advice to the client was to be of good cheer: he should start out in the evening, take along gifts for the chief, and be careful in his dealings with women; he would return, after a successful trip, in four or five days (which last prophecy was nowhere indicated in the cords). The second divination was concerned with identifying the *kuci* of a boy just born to the client (a man). Here the diviner was interested only in the first two 'houses', the first referring to 'God', the second to 'House', that is, to the client's position of a family head. After several throws the diviner obtained this combination:

Cords	1	2
Shell patterns	4	6

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whereupon he announced: 'The grandfather who begot your father—his name is that of the child.' The diviner would not explain his reasoning more precisely beyond saying that pattern 4 in 'house' 1, meaning 'many deaths', must relate to a *kuci* five 'deaths', i.e. generations, removed, while pattern 2 in 'house' 6 indicated the male sex of the *kuci*. Since the Nupe usually regard a great-grandfather as the most remote ancestor likely to be reincarnated, the diviner's reference to an additional generation would seem to be a plausible interpretation of a throw meaning 'many deaths'.

4. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The names of the 'houses' and the meanings attached to the various throws, even in the simple key series, clearly illustrate the close connection between divination and social life. Among the names and meanings we find represented, not only the universal problems of men and communities (death, birth, rain, illness) or particular religious notions (*Sokó*, *kuti*, performance of sacrifices), but also the mundane interests typical of Nupe society. Events on the high roads and travel and trade; the ever-present social issue of 'greatness', that is, of success in the struggle for rank and status; and the equally ubiquitous interest in matters politic, chieftainship, councils of elders, the actions of the ruling class—all these have their place in the scheme of divining and partly even in its basic vocabulary. Similarly, each relevant social grouping is explicitly referred to: the 'house', that is, the large extended family under a family head (*emi*); the 'town' or village (*eží*); the 'whole country', that is, the kingdom of Nupe; and the class of the 'great men' and nobility. As we have seen, the diverse social settings of the capital and of the villages are reflected in certain variants in the rules of divination. These affect the individual case as well; for a diviner would interpret the prophecies referring to 'gifts' or 'greatness' differently when dealing with a *talaka* (a commoner or peasant) than when dealing with a member of the aristocracy. In the former case 'gifts' mean bowls of food and 'greatness' the favours of a nobleman; in the latter case the gifts turn into more valuable presents, and 'greatness' bears on promotion in rank and title. We have seen, too, that the rules of divination are far from static, having been successfully adapted even to recent conditions and to political problems only some forty years old. We can even point to a typical, transitional phase in this process; for the choice mentioned before, of interpreting the same throw as meaning either 'rain' or 'friendly relations with the White Man', means nothing else.

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It is easy enough for the diviner to guess the status and background of his clients, and hence their likely interests, even if they are strangers to him. For dress and general behaviour reveal a good deal in Nupe; and the questions put to a diviner are usually sufficiently specific to give him such clues as he may need. Well-known personages, incidentally, such as members of the high nobility, never consult a diviner in person; they send messengers who are not supposed to divulge the names of their employers. But these messengers are usually servants or retainers of the nobleman in question, and as well known as he.

Generally speaking, the Nupe diviner tends to be optimistic; if some trouble is forecast, the suggestion of a ready remedy or some warning easily observed would accompany the prophecy. I have, in fact, not met with any prophecy which was outright disastrous. Nor is the Nupe diviner given to cryptic statements; ambiguous though his technical vocabulary may be, his communications to clients are clear and straightforward. Occasionally he makes use of symbolic allusions, which are, however, readily understood; thus the mention of 'dark' or 'black' things means that the prospect is bleak or frightening; 'white' means luck and good prospects, while 'red' indicates wealth, ampleness, prosperity.

In order to gain a clear picture of the variety of problems on which diviners are usually consulted, I employed a crude statistical technique. I supplied four diviners with sheets of paper on which I drew rough pictures representing certain expected topics and instructed them to mark, underneath, their visitors, day by day for one month—a stroke for a man and a circle for a woman. Cross-strokes were meant to indicate repeated visits, while space was left for additional topics. It must be noted that all four men had a high reputation in their locality so that the size of their clientele, which proved to differ widely, did not reflect their unequal renown. Rather surprisingly, the largest and most regular clientele was that of a diviner in Bida, where I should have expected the competition of sand-divining to have spoiled the market for the pagan variety. The next best clientele was that of a diviner in Saci, a small hamlet near Bida, while the custom of two diviners in the heart of the country, in Kutigi and Jebba, was markedly smaller. The season of the year, incidentally, did not seem to affect the diviner's business.

The Bida diviner had thirty-seven male and twelve female visitors in a month (in March); of these five men had come twice, and one man three times. The diviner knew personally only one of his clients, who was his brother-in-law and came from Doko. The diviner in Saci was consulted twenty-eight times by men and twice by women (in January); three men had come twice, four men

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787 four times, and one woman twice. Again, he knew few of his clients personally, though he knew that they came in about equal proportion from Bida and from the hamlets nearby. The diviner on Jebba Island had six male and five female clients (in June), one of the women coming twice. Though Jebba Island is a small village it lies close to an important river port with a considerable floating population of traders, canoe-men, and other strangers. It is understandable, therefore, that, with two exceptions, the diviner's clients were all strangers. The diviner in Kutigi, finally, had four male and two female clients (in March): all were local people and well known to him.

The reasons for which the diviners were consulted varied characteristically with local conditions. In Bida, consultations about prospects of trade came first (in the case of both men and women); only a little less important were enquiries about projected journeys—when to set out, whether to travel at all, and so forth—and about the well-being of distant relatives whom the client thought of visiting; there were a few cases of men who consulted the diviner about marriages they had in mind, of men and women who desired children, and of others who wished to divine the name of a new-born child; very few consultations were about illness, and even fewer about favours which men of high status were anxious to obtain from the king. Excepting the last topic, the diviner in Saci had to deal with almost exactly the same set of problems. In Jebba, the order of topics was as follows—journeys and distant relatives; childbirth and naming of a new-born; trade; illness and enquiries as to the appropriate 'medicine' or sacrifice; and some unspecific requests for fortune-telling. In Kutigi much the same topics occurred, with the exception of enquiries about trade, which were absent in this predominantly rural community; enquiries about projected journeys and distant relatives were at the bottom of the list, which tallies with the geographically much more limited range of Kutigi marriages and movements in general. We note the absence of enquiries about projected marriages both in Jebba and Kutigi; the reason seems to be that in the villages marriage is much more rigidly laid down by custom and more firmly controlled by the kin group; the restriction of individual choice, then, obviates the need for the diviner's services.

A final reason for consulting the diviner, on matters of communal ritual, does not appear in our lists, mainly because they are based on random periods and hence apt to miss these relatively infrequent occasions. Consultations of this kind are the responsibility of the village chief or the *kuti* priest. They take place, less often on the occasion of the fixed, seasonal *kuti*, than at times when an unexpected misfortune threatens the community; in the

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former case, too, it is sometimes considered advisable to make sure of a propitious day; but in the latter case divination may be the only means for discovering the appropriate religious remedy. Let me mention in passing the widespread conviction that even the Emir of Nupe consults diviners (of the Mohammedan variety), in large numbers and 'for whole weeks at a time', to aid him in his multifarious problems: which belief, in spite of its circumstantial nature, is unsupported by such evidence as I could muster.[1]

One more word about the frequency of the visits one pays the diviner. For the townspeople no rule can be laid down; persons who seek advice on trade, travels, promotion in rank or other specific questions will obviously consult the diviner *ad hoc*, whenever the need happens to arise. It is somewhat different in the villages, where people also go to the diviner simply to have their fortunes told. Here individuals would pay fairly regular visits, once or twice a month, or at least once in two or three months. I have, however, spoken to villagers who had not been to the diviner for as much as five or six months.

The diviner is paid a small fee every time he is consulted. The fee is neither rigidly laid down nor claimed in advance. In Bida, the diviner is usually paid in money, though a bowl of rice or a few kolanuts may be thrown in, the client paying according to his ability, between a penny and sixpence. In the village one mostly pays in food or kolanuts. The diviners themselves regard the payments as 'gifts', and would strongly deny that they are divining 'for money'. No diviner could in fact live on what his skill earns him; nor does a diviner's reputation add in any way to his status in this rank-conscious society. Divining is merely an additional vocation, prized for the mystic wisdom and power it implies rather than for material or social gains.

This brings me to the last point, the social position of the diviner himself. Divination is essentially 'learning'—a skill that can be acquired by anyone having a 'good head'; if it is hereditary in a family it is so only incidentally. A great many diviners learned the art, in their youth, from another expert, paying for the tuition. One Bida diviner, for example, a man of about sixty-five, had learned divination when he was fifteen, studying for ten months, 'every day as in school'. Another had learned the craft from a stranger he met on his wanderings when a young man. Two diviners made an exceptional and unorthodox claim; while admitting that they had to acquire the skill, they maintained that they had 'learned it from God', by inspiration as it were. The majority of the diviners I met were also farmers; one was a barber by

[1] According to tradition, the old kings of Nupe had numerous official diviners among their retinue; this practice has certainly disappeared.

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people are unlikely to pass. These two rules, then, and the 'consecration' of the diviner's tools with its reference to the presence of God, demonstrate the mystic power that attaches to divining and to those who handle it, and the sacred provenance of the skill. As we have seen, however, this evidence of sacredness does not content every individual; so that some will also claim that their whole knowledge is divinely inspired or that their paraphernalia are gifts of God. 791

Whatever status the diviner will claim for himself, for his art he will always claim the perfection of a well thought-out system, governed by rigorous, consistent rules, even though he must resort to far-fetched arguments to prove his case. Let us consider this point for a moment. The diviners clearly represent a selected group of individuals, not a random sample; for only those with particular leanings and aptitudes—those with a 'good head'—will choose this profession. Now, comparing the manner in which the Nupe generally are apt to discuss religious topics with the attitude shown by the diviners in their field, we find that one of the variants of the former constitutes the norm of the latter. The layman discussing religion may or may not be inclined to embark upon speculation: the diviner discussing divination does so as a matter of course if by this means he can force his facts into a more convincing order. Equally, in the act of divining, he is capable of a tense and dramatic mood. The first attitude only satisfies the diviner's own leanings; for his public takes no interest in these speculative refinements and cannot appreciate them. But his public does expect the diviner to be tense and excited, and is visibly impressed by his excursions into drama. In either case, we may conclude, the diviner's role offers a congenial niche to individuals of that religious bias or, more generally, of that temperament and intellectual predisposition.

5. THE MECHANICS OF HATI

Although we are not at the moment concerned with the influence of Islam on Nupe religion, it is convenient to discuss the Mohammedan variant of divination in this context. For in the main it is only the technique which is novel in this system of divining, while its topics, interpretation, and social aspects coincide with those typical of the pagan system. Partly, too, the two techniques share various points of resemblance, such as the designs of the 'key' figures or the use of series of eight, so that it would seem that the new, Mohammedan, practice has been assimilated to the older, indigenous method. 787

Hati or sand divination is even more fully a learned skill than

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787 is the system of *eba*. Its performance is prosaic, without any show of excitement or drama. Even its links with things sacred are reduced to the level of strictly occupational accomplishments since *hati* is one of the skills which 'mallams' alone can acquire, that is, men who have studied the Qoran and acquired at least the rudiments of Moslem learning. Most of these mallams-cum-diviners are found in Bida. They include men of widely varying status, learning, and reputation. Two of my diviner friends will illustrate the extremes. One was a highly educated scholar, who could read and write Arabic, possessed a number of books, and had some knowledge of Islamic doctrine. The other could read a little, though without much understanding; he could not write more than the cryptic cypher the diviners put on the sand table before starting to divine; and he neither knew the Qoran nor possessed any knowledge of Islamic doctrine. The first case, however, was an exception; for the true Islamic scholars (by Nupe standards) do not normally engage in divining; while the diviners are not infrequently men who had been unsuccessful in the scholarly profession. Thus one diviner had studied the Qoran but, earning too little as a mallam, later became a beadworker, supplementing his earnings by divination and the sale of charms. Another diviner was at the same time a trader in a small way, a third a hatmaker. Some of the sand diviners (including the scholarly mallam) seemed to be doing very well, having one to three clients a day. Less successful ones would still have two or three a week. Only one of the five diviners I knew had had no customers for a month, though he claimed that this was exceptional.

Like the *eba* system sand-divination has its 'key' and key series, though these are not embodied in a separate set of objects but are carried entirely in the diviner's head. A more substantial 'key' does in fact exist; it is contained in a book on divination, written in Arabic and amply illustrated with diagrams, the relevant pages of which are in the possession of most diviners; while actually divining, however, this book of rules is never consulted. The diviner's apparatus is simple, consisting only of sand, flattened out on the ground so that it forms a square, smooth surface, on which the various signs are impressed with the tips of the fingers. Before he begins, the diviner draws a cypher in the sand, which looks vaguely like an Arabic sign but which I was unable to identify; it is said to be the 'sign of the king', but fits neither 'king' nor 'Allah', nor any other word I could think of in this connection. To the right and left of the cypher certain of the 'key' signs are impressed, varying with the day of the week. On Friday, for example, the diviner puts sign 14 on the left and sign 7 on the right; on Sunday he draws signs 15 and 9; on Monday, signs 4 and

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5, and so forth. Saturday alone has more than two signs, namely, the four signs 6, 8, 10, and 13. No reason is quoted why this arrangement rather than any other should be chosen. Having completed this preparatory task, the diviner wipes the surface clean again and starts with the real divining. 787

He impresses small dots into the square of sand, one beside the other, starting from the left bottom edge and describing an arc up and down again to the right side of the square. He produces sixteen such dotted arcs, one underneath the other, which are considered to fall into four sets of four arcs. Having completed this fourfold set, the diviner wipes out every second dot in each arc, now starting from the right, down to the left bottom edge; where the last dot to be wiped out would be the last dot of the arc, that dot is left intact, so that in this case a double dot remains. As a result, the diviner obtains four patterns of dots lying along the left bottom edge and consisting each of four single or double dots.[1] These four patterns, as will be seen, are obtained entirely by chance. Once they are obtained, however, chance ceases to play a part; for the subsequent procedure is purely mechanical and rests on computations and manipulations all ultimately based on the four initial dot patterns. First, the sand table is once more wiped clean. Then the diviner draws the four patterns into the right upper space, the pattern which was originally farthest to the left being placed farthest to the right, and so forth in that order. In this new position the four patterns are drawn upright and symmetrically, and now represent the proper 'signs' of *hati*. From this first group of four signs the diviner derives a similar second group, which he draws into the left upper space; he does this by converting each horizontal line of dots in the first group into a corresponding upright column in the second, thus:

Underneath this row of eight signs a second and then a third row are drawn, now numbering four signs each. The lower rows are obtained by coupling adjacent signs in the next higher row and reducing each such pair of signs to a single sign in the row below. In the case of the top row each sign is coupled once only, that is, in accordance with this schema—*ab*, *cd*, *ef*, *gh* (if *a*–*h* are the eight

[1] Sometimes the diviner draws only eight arcs at a time, in which case the process just described has to be repeated.

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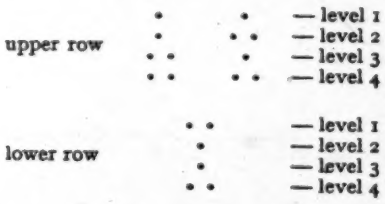
787 signs). In the second row each of the four signs is coupled both ways with its neighbour, so that again four pairs result, thus—*ab*, *cd*, *ad*, *bc*. In reducing a pair of signs to one, the diviner adds up the dots which appear horizontally, on the same level, in the two given signs and considers whether the total for each level is two, three or four; if the total is two or four, the resulting sign in the next lower row will have a double dot on the corresponding level, if the total is three, a single dot. For example:



Having thus obtained sixteen signs in three rows, the diviner performs a further calculation. He adds up the total number of dots appearing on the top level of each of the three rows and deducts twelve from the total or, if the difference exceeds sixteen, twice twelve. The balance gives him the key series number of a particular dot pattern, which he must then locate in his sand drawing and use as a starting point for the interpretation. The proviso, that the difference must not be more than sixteen, is explained by the fact that the key series itself consists of sixteen signs, so that a number larger than this would be useless. It is possible, however, that the number so obtained might be that of a sign which happens to be missing in the sand drawing; if so, the diviner will look instead for one of the six 'kindred' signs, which will be discussed presently.

The diagram opposite illustrates the key series of *hati* divining; with two exceptions its general design is also that of the actual sand drawing. The first exception is of a minor order and refers to the lay-out of the third row which, in the key series, is broken up into three-plus-one signs. The second exception refers to the principle upon which the key series is constructed. This bears no relation to the procedure just discussed, whereby the diviner derives his whole drawing from an initial group of four signs; rather, the key series seems to be put together almost at random, though we may note (a point strongly emphasized by all diviners) that the total number of dots in each group of four signs is always twenty-four. As we shall see, this discrepancy in the construction of the two designs does not prevent the diviners from explaining both by an identical analogy.

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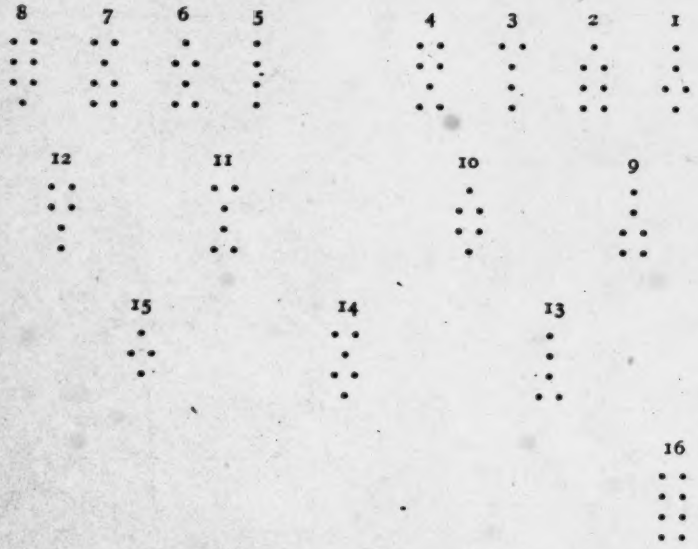
We note the resemblance between the dot patterns and certain of the markings on the *eba* slabs. In the case of *hati*, however, the key series is complete, its sixteen signs including every possible combination of single and double dots grouped in this manner. Let me mention some other similarities. The correct name for the signs in their key position is 'stars', which is consistent with the vaguely astrological background of sand-divining; in spite of this, the diviner will usually refer to them as 'houses', that is, in the phraseology of *eba* divination. A single dot in any sign is called



'open' and a double dot 'closed', as though the diviner were again dealing with shells falling face-up or face-down. The actual divination, finally, rests once more upon considering the varying positions (or 'houses') in which any one sign may appear and upon combining the meanings of place and pattern.

This procedure, however, is backed by a different theory and a much more elaborate set of rules. To begin with there is the astrological background of sand-divining. The signs in their key position (the 'stars') have long, Arabic-sounding names, said to be the names of constellations.[1] In each sign the four levels of single or

[1] These are too complicated for regular quotation, so that the diviner uses the key-series number instead. I could identify only a few of these names, which would seem to refer, not to constellations, but to diverse Islamic concepts. *Almayika*, the name for pattern 2, is probably *Mala'ikah*, 'Angels', which is also the name of the 35th *Surah* of the Qoran. *Atariki*, pattern 5,

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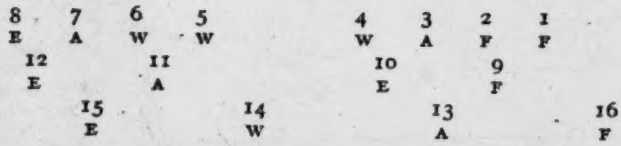
787 double dots (counting from top to bottom) represent the four elements—Fire, Air, Water, Earth. Equally, the key series as a whole is taken to symbolize the four elements; these are so distributed over the sixteen signs that the three groups of four in the first and second row each contain three of the elements, one of them twice, while the group of four in the bottom row includes all four elements in their proper order (reading from right to left), thus:



The analogy with the four elements plays no further part in the interpretation of the key series. Here their spatial arrangement alone is important and its meaning is explained with the help of a different analogy, with procreation and kinship. The first group of four signs (1–4) is called the 'mother-group'; the next group (5–8), the 'children' (there being no corresponding 'father' group); the four signs in the second row (9–12) are called 'grandchildren', and the three signs in the bottom row (13–15), 'great-grandchildren'. Sign 16, which contains the largest possible number of dots and stands apart in the design, also has an independent meaning in this pseudo-genealogy: it represents the 'mother' of all the other signs, and in the divination bears a prophecy concerning the diviner himself. The four 'mother' signs in the first group are said to 'give birth' to the 'children' signs, these to the 'grandchildren' signs, and so forth. The latter analogy is once more applied to the drawing of the design in actual divination; for when the diviner derives the second group of signs from the first, and similarly the lower rows from those above, this procedure is again described as signs 'giving birth' to signs. The same procedure also establishes other, more specific links of 'kinship' between the signs; for all those signs which, by means of this procedure, would produce the same resultant sign (or 'give birth' to it) are regarded as that sign's 'kin'. In demonstrating this connection repetitions and signs appearing in reverse are ignored, so that each sign has

seems to be *Tariq*, 'Way' (of belief) and the name of the 86th *Surah*. *Nasuralharaja*, pattern 9, and *Nasuraldahili*, pattern 12, may mean *Nasr al kharaj* and *Nasr al dakhl*—'Luck on leaving' and 'Luck on Entering' (?). The name for the last and fullest pattern (No. 16), *Jim'a*, is Arabic for 'assembly', 'congregation'. *Almanhu*, the name for pattern 8, seems to be the Nupe word *Manhó* arabicized, meaning 'Great Scholar'.

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six 'relatives'.[1] The diagram below illustrates this for the first sign in the key series. The example also shows, incidentally, that the 'kinship' so derived conflicts with that other, genealogical, schema, since now a sign of the 'mother' group is assumed to be 'born' of signs belonging to the offspring generations. The logical conflict, however, has no further consequences; only the 'kinship' between signs is made use of in the practice of divining, while the genealogical schema remains pure 'theory'.

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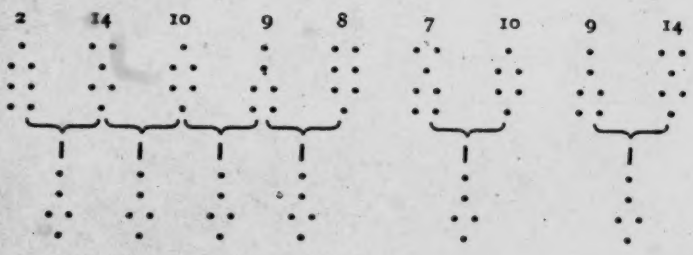

6. INTERPRETATION

Let me now list the meanings attributed to the various signs in the key series and hence to any sign in its own 'house'. Each position in the key series has a brief name, this time quoted in Nupe not in Arabic, which corresponds to the 'code' names of *eba* divining and similarly alludes to the respective prophecy.

No. 1. Good health; the client will have a son. Code name 'Life and War'; the latter allusion is, as it were, per contra, war being the destroyer of life and sons.

No. 2. Some day the client will be rich ('Wealth').

No. 3. The client will some day have a large family and receive many gifts ('Kinship').

No. 4. The client's wife, or a female client, will become pregnant ('Father and Mother').

No. 5. As No. 1 ('Child').

No. 6. Recovery after illness ('Illness').

No. 7. The client will find a good wife or husband ('Marriage').

No. 8. The whole town will be thrown into strife and upheaval ('Uproar', 'Commotion').

[1] The 'mother' sign 16, which consists wholly of double dots, is equally ignored. Bearing in mind the rules for reducing two signs to one, it will readily be seen that sign 16 cannot be derived from any other pair of signs. In this sense it is rightly placed apart from the rest of the design. There is a further kind of 'kinship', which is however unimportant. It links each sign with the one showing the same pattern in reverse, and sign 1 (which is entirely 'open') with its opposite, sign 16 (which is entirely 'closed').

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787 No. 9. A successful journey ('Voyage').

No. 10. All the leaders of the town will meet in consultation, but will arrive at bad decisions ('Nobility', 'Office Holders').

No. 11. God will listen to all prayers and cause all 'medicines' to work successfully ('Doubts').

No. 12. Success in love against rivals ('Enemy').

No. 13. Success in every enterprise ('Writing', 'Prayer').

No. 14. Financial success ('Trade' and 'Money').

No. 15. Fear and worries will disappear ('Barbers'; the allusion is to the many barbers who are also doctors and thus make illness 'disappear').

No. 16. The diviner will find many clients ('Mallam').

In the actual divination not every sign is located, identified, and interpreted in accordance with its varying position; this would clearly be immensely complicated, and the diviner does not even pretend to do it. Rather does he greatly simplify the procedure by various means. Thus he assesses and interprets the combination of place and sign only in the case of the one sign which serves as his starting point. Assuming, for example, that this happens to be sign 12 in the key series, meaning 'wealth', and that in the actual design it appears in 'house' No. 2, which in turn means 'enemy'; the diviner would then conclude that 'people are jealous of the client's wealth' or that the client 'will rival the wealth of others', according to which divination seems more plausible in the case of a particular person. The diviner's next step consists in tracing the six 'kindred' signs; and now he no longer considers the precise position of the signs but only their relative order, that is, whether they occur in a place with a higher or lower number. The sign occurring in the place with the higher number (that is, further to the left or in a lower row) is said to 'eat up' the 'kindred' sign in the place or places with the next lower number; which means that the prophecy of the former will overrule the prophecy of the latter. For example, sign 13 ('Prayer') occurring to the left of the 'kindred' sign 8 ('Uproar') is taken to indicate that 'prayer will eventually overcome the strife'.

Furthermore, the sixteen signs are allocated to four series on the grounds of their allegedly similar meaning. The first series includes all signs referring to wealth, success, health and high social position, (signs 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16); the second series includes all signs referring to poverty, misfortune, ill health, and other worries of the moment (signs 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 15); the third series is said to concern men—(signs 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16), the last series women (signs 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15). The main merit of this arrangement, which incidentally does not quite tally with the interpretations listed before, seems to be that it operates with two

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pairs of broadly contrasted categories of wide applicability and with four series of eight, which are relatively easy to remember. In interpreting these series, the diviner will always take into account whether his client is a man or a woman. Thus, if the sign to be interpreted belongs to series 1 (meaning 'success') and series 4 ('concerning women'), and occurs in the consultation of a man, the diviner will conclude that his client will be successful in finding a wife. If the same combination occurs in the case of a female client, it will probably mean that she will be prosperous in business. If the sign belongs to series 1 and 3 ('concerning men'), and occurs in the case of a male client, the latter will 'gain reputation and rank'. If the sign belongs to series 2 (meaning 'misfortune') and 4 ('concerning women') and occurs in the case of a female client, it might mean that she will have a difficult pregnancy, and so forth.

It is clear that in this flexible system of divination the diviner will be guided by the particular case of his client much more fully than is his pagan colleague; in fact, the system of divination itself acknowledges the importance at least of the sex of the client. Also, the diviner has several methods of calculation at his disposal and is free to choose the less complicated one provided it still offers a plausible prophecy. This is borne out by the existence of an optional, final rule which reduces the whole system of divination to a simple mechanical procedure. This rule lays down that all signs which have a single dot at the top and a double dot at the base, so that they 'point away' from the diviner, bear an adverse prophecy; while all signs of the opposite design, 'pointing inward', are propitious. If the diviner uses this simplified method exclusively he will consider only the 'houses' that bear on the client's question and phrase his reply accordingly. In a consultation I watched the diviner was asked if the client would recover some goods that had been stolen. The diviner looked at 'house' 2, meaning 'wealth', at 'house' 9, meaning 'voyage' (since the goods had been 'carried away'), at 'house' 12, 'enemy', and at 'houses' 13 and 14, implying 'success'. The signs at 2 and 13 were inconclusive; the signs at 9 and 12 pointed outward; only the sign at 14 had a propitious meaning. The answer was, quite plausibly, that it was no good looking for the thieves; the client might be successful if he could follow them; but this was difficult since they had by then left the town with their loot.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Nupe sand-divining is the contrast between its pretentious theoretical framework and its primitive and slipshod application in practice. In some respects the 'theory' simply evaporates in the 'practice', as in the high-sounding Arabic nomenclature which gives way to common Nupe

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expressions or in the astrological notions of which no use is ever made. The practice is clearly meant to cope with the relevant problems and interests of Nupe social life; and these, let us note, are now typical, not only of a Mohammedan community, but also of a highly urbanized one. There is no longer any mention of rain, of the prospects of hunting, or of the influence of *kuti*; instead, we find references to 'writing and prayer', to mallams and barber-doctors, to 'the whole town in strife', and the strong emphasis on travel and trade, including travel and trade 'concerning women'.

The discrepancy between the theoretical framework of *hati* and its practical application suggests once more an attempt to assimilate the Mohammedan system to local conditions. The attempt is crude and unambitious, stopping far short of anything like a true synthesis; rather, any feature which cannot readily be assimilated is left on one side and only nominally acknowledged. Occasionally even this bare acknowledgement is discarded, as is shown in this example. One diviner, able to read his Arabic book on divination, discovered in it a new rule which distinguished between 'fixed' and 'movable' stars and operated with series of seven and the corresponding permutations. The diviner frankly admitted that he did not fully understand the rule: consequently he simply ignored it, not even borrowing the new nomenclature.

7. CONCLUSIONS: DREAM INTERPRETATION

I have called the guidance offered by divination mechanical and of a case-to-case kind. The preceding discussion will have borne out this description. Nupe divination is concerned less with foreknowledge in its own right than with resolving the problems and obscurities of the moment. The diviner can discover and disentangle some of the hidden influences which are at work always and everywhere, and can to that extent predict—piecemeal, and illuminating only the immediate future: he cannot uncover any more embracing design. Indeed, as we know, there is no such design in this non-committal and fundamentally amoral religion. Yet within the limits set to it divination has a part to play, providing some of the certainty and guidance required for provident action. We may call Nupe divination a concession or compromise; for as its scope is so restricted by the logic of Nupe religious thought, the fact that it exists at all, is a concession exacted by the practical needs of human life.

Let us note that religion itself adds to these needs. We spoke of the 'proliferation' of Nupe religious thought which crowds the universe with supernatural agencies overlapping in their effects and multiplies the supernatural aids, so that their appropriateness

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can only be discovered by trial and error. Once more divination is needed to reduce the uncertainties which must arise; it is thus that it becomes a 'prerequisite' of religious no less than of practical action.[1] And here, I think, we find the explanation for a somewhat puzzling point of Nupe doctrine. Although Nupe divination is marked off as being 'of God', it is not numbered among the other, similar 'things of the world', that is, of creation. Nor are there any legends explaining its origin or appearance on earth. This ambiguity seems in keeping with the peculiar role of divination in Nupe religious practice. Divination is clearly one of the tools bestowed by God upon man so that he may be better fitted to cope with the practical problems of life on earth; but these include also the problem of handling successfully all the other transcendental tools. And just because divination is such a twofold 'prerequisite' and so basically indispensable, its presence is simply taken for granted.

The role of divination in Nupe life, however, must not be exaggerated. It is far from all-important; the Nupe, for example, do not practise divination as regularly or consistently as do many other primitive societies. When I asked my informants if they consulted diviners daily or perhaps weekly, they simply laughed. In a great many walks of life one can carry on without this mystic advice; for daily life has its own routine and its own practical rules, on which one can safely rely. Medicine, too, has its routine side. So has religious life: the seasonal rituals, fixed by the calendar of the country, are performed largely without the aid of diviners. Only when the routine of everyday life breaks down and when its rules prove inadequate in the face of choice, that is, when anxieties and uncertainties arise, divination comes into its own.

Among the topics handled by the Nupe diviner we should perhaps expect to find also dreams, especially since they offer so important clues to witchcraft and to the activities of spirits and *fifingi*. Yet this is not so. Certain rules for interpreting dreams exist, but their knowledge does not appear to be widespread, being altogether absent in certain parts of the country. Even where it exists, it is shared by diviners and laymen alike and is never made the subject of divining proper. The Nupe do puzzle about their dreams and suspect that a curious dream may have a message or purport something important; in this case the dreamer might discuss his experience with others, and together they would speculate about the likely meaning. Or, where there are individuals knowledgeable about dreams, the dreamer would look for one of them among his friends or fellow villagers, the 'expert' claiming neither payment nor special status.

[1] See above, p. 37.

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● 787 Generally speaking, there are three kinds of dreams. If your dream is accompanied by pains and nightmares, then it betrays the presence of an evil *aljénu*, which must be dealt with by the appropriate gifts to spirits. If you dream that some other person is about to kill you, then this is evidence of witchcraft. In neither event is it necessary to consult any book of rules since this kind of dream is obvious to everyone. If, however, your dream is merely unusual or odd, then it requires interpretation according to the rules, which would usually also suggest certain observances meant to secure the promise of the dream or to ward off its veiled threats.

Thus, when you dream of herds of wild animals, it means that witches threaten you; when you dream of herds of cows, you may expect wealth and success, though you should make a gift of milk to a mallam. A man who dreams of women or girls in the water will marry well, provided he presents some honey and millet to the unmarried young men of his acquaintance and some fish to the married men; the same applies (suitably adapted) to the corresponding dreams of women, though in their case omission of the gifts would bring on severe and painful menstruation. A man dreaming of a black snake will prosper in his enterprise provided he sacrifices a white cock to the *kuci*; in the case of a woman the dream means pregnancy. If you weep in your dream, you will be successful; if you laugh, you will die, and no sacrifice and the like will help you. A fish freshly caught means the birth of a child; a dried fish, the death of an acquaintance or relative. The latter meaning is also attributed to dreams about digging out yams, since this suggests the digging of a grave. Both fire and water indicate witches, and such dreams must be followed by sacrifices to *kuci* or by alms to the poor. Excrements mean sickness; so does blood in a man's dreams; in a woman's dreams it may mean childbirth (if it is 'good' blood, that is, from menstruation) or abortion (if it is 'bad' blood, from a wound). No dreams, incidentally, tell a woman anything about her prospective child: this is simply 'God's will'. Finally, if you dream about a person being killed, then this is the truth, and you will warn that person, who must in turn consult a diviner.

In these dream interpretations Mohammedan ideas (alms, gifts to mallams) and pagan ones (sacrifices to the *kuci*) are employed quite indiscriminately. So are diverse principles of interpretation; some, as we saw, fasten upon contrasts, others upon analogies more or less close or suggestive. Certainly, we find no consistent symbolism, nor yet any of the 'universal' symbols cited by psychoanalysts. More important, the prophecies attributed to dreams are much the same as those dispensed by the diviner, so that the interpretation of dreams (which one can do for oneself) and pro-

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fessional divination in some measure duplicate one another. If this means that the diviner has no monopoly of prophecy, it equally means that one need not be very seriously concerned over one's dreams, since the message they might hold would also transpire in some other way. Normally, in fact, the people are not inclined to take their dreams very seriously, even in the localities where there are experts versed in that lore. I used to record all the dreams of the Nupe men with whom I was in daily contact; though they were quite often puzzled about their dreams, they performed sacrifices and so forth only when their dreams referred to dead relatives. Dream interpretation, then, represents another 'supererogatory' element in Nupe religious thought, another 'additional' notion about the meaning of the things in the world, and now one conspicuously treated as such.

Let me add that in other respects, too, the diviner holds no monopoly of prophecy. If he pronounces upon lucky or unlucky days, some knowledge of this kind is common throughout Nupe. Thus two months, the seventh and thirteenth, are held to be unlucky, and people will avoid travelling or having wedding feasts and other celebrations at these times. In all other months certain days are specially lucky—the second, seventh, twelfth, seventeenth and eighteenth day; so is the time of full moon, while moonless days are unlucky and dangerous for all tasks.[1]

If divination and the interpretation of dreams represent supernatural aids which overlap in their efficacy but are of different ease of access, this is true also of the knowledge, shared by everybody, of propitious and unpropitious dates. In other words, for much the same kind of guidance you can rely on your own knowledge, on what you or your friends know about dreams, and on the professional advice of diviners. Once more we note the 'proliferation' of Nupe religious thought and that tendency to multiply the mystic tools, that is, to have 'several strings to one's bow.'

[1] It is usual in Nupe to refer to months and days in this way, by numbers rather than names. The interval of five between the lucky days, incidentally, plays no further part in Nupe thought or religious observances.

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4. SOLEMNIZATIONS

We now turn to ceremonials which do not stand on their own, as so many efforts to wield supernatural power for particular ends, but which surround or merge with certain critical mundane events, birth, death, and marriage. For the Nupe, these ceremonials do not represent *kuti*, rituals proper: they do not move the force that is in the universe; nor do they belong to the tools which God granted man for this purpose. The ceremonials of birth, death, or marriage are merely observances, customary ways of dealing with the events in question or, as the Nupe say, 'ways of doing things'. If we call them 'rituals' or 'rites', we are applying our own nomenclature for such procedures. Even so, these 'ways of doing things' involve appeals to God and some link with the whole system of religious ideas; that is, they are *solemnizations* of mundane acts.

(i) *Birth*

The observances bearing on childbirth begin already with conception and culminate, some time after the actual birth, in the naming ceremonial, so that the event of birth is treated, not as a climax, but as one in a series of events or stages. This concern with pre- and post-natal phases corresponds closely to the Nupe conceptions of life and of body and soul; several of the respective observances, however, are neither specifically 'religious' nor explicitly fitted into the 'natural philosophy' of the people, belonging rather to the more indefinite range of notions we commonly call superstitions.

Thus the most auspicious time for conception is laid down, in typical Nupe manner, by numbering the day in question, which should be the fifth after the mother's menses. The night should be young, for a child conceived in the dark of the night, when spirits and witches are abroad, might easily be born misshapen. As soon as the pregnancy is noticeable (in the third month, as the Nupe calculate, or at the latest in the fifth), the parents must discontinue sexual relations; the mother must avoid places inhabited by spirits as well as certain kinds of food which might harm the child: honey would give it adenoids, and a certain fish cause it to have six fingers on one hand. I have already mentioned that the avoidance of cohabitation continues for about three years after the birth of the child, since a new conception and pregnancy might stop the growth of the infant. In addition to these general rules and avoidances, which everyone knows, there may be special ones, ordered by the diviner, whom the expectant father will at once consult.

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either with or without specified actions and utterances. Their avowed purposes are frequently therapeutic, but also include defences against theft, witchcraft, and devices to render one invisible. Nupe leech-lore includes both rational empirical cures and mystical rites which can produce no result beyond increasing the confidence of the user. Nor is there any distinction in Nupe vocabulary, for the term *cigbe* is used for all medicines. Medicines may be distinguished as those which are practically effective or may be easily taken as being effective by practitioners, and those whose objective irrationality cannot be mistaken. The latter class may include devices for rendering a man invisible, medicines for killing thieves and fending off witchcraft, and for making hoes do their work in half the normal time.

There are four main types of practitioners of medicine: the guild of Moslem barber-doctors, the pagan order of *cigbeciĩ*, and two kinds of individual practitioners.

The barber-doctors' guild is recognized by the *Etsu* Nupe but is confined almost entirely to the towns. The guild head occupies an important position at court. They are entirely concerned with therapeutic medicines, but are regarded with contempt in the country districts where people feel that a barber cannot know about such things.

The *cigbeciĩ*, formerly recognized by the *Etsu*, but since replaced by the barber-doctors, are much more loosely organized than the guild. Whereas the latter keep their knowledge mainly within their lineages, the *cigbeciĩ* crafts can be bought by anyone. There is little corporate activity beyond occasional gatherings at the local head's house to discuss practice. The head is traditionally responsible for all new medicines. Offerings are made to the spirits of the order and through them to *Sokó*, the ultimate source of *cigbe*, whenever a new medicine is discovered. The names of spirits may also be introduced in the application of medicines, but there appears to be no invocation. With this mystical approach there is a greater sense of the implications of " medicine " for good and for evil. While Moslem barbers, though not concerned with the more " dangerous " medicines, sell without scruple medicines for immoral purposes, such as those to induce barrenness in women, *cigbeciĩ* claim to be very particular as to whom they sell the more powerful *cigbe*. The powers of witchcraft are often said to require medicines, while the conflict between witchcraft and anti-witchcraft is sometimes represented as a struggle between good and bad *cigbe*.

Individual practitioners are of two kinds: those who provide cures for petty ailments, and Moslem mallams and scholars who write a passage from the Koran which is washed off and drunk by the patient. They also provide amulets containing Koran texts, as elsewhere in Islamic West Africa.

Some medicines, the ingredients of which are not known, belong to descent groups and are kept in vessels into which libations of beer and offerings of blood are poured to the ancestors.

The neophyte to the order of witches as imagined by the Nupe must, it is believed, bathe himself in certain medicines and observe certain taboos, and the masked dancer who impersonates and is possessed by the spirit of the anti-witchcraft society[10] uses certain medicines while others are placed on the mask to give it and its dancer their unique character. There are in addition individual medicines used as defences against magic, and ordeal medicines which will kill the witch who drinks, but leave the innocent unharmed.

Divination[11]

Divination plays an important part in Nupe life and is used not only to determine the rites to be performed in particular situations but to decide such matters as the election of a high officer of state. The two methods used are the old system,

[10] See below.
[11] Nadel, 1942, p. 379; 1954a, pp. 36–67.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

787 widespread in West Africa, based on the patterns made by strings of shells when they are thrown, and a form of Arabic sand pattern divining performed only by Moslem "teachers."

Shell divination (*eba*) is similar in technique to Yoruba *ifa*, and is practised mainly in the villages and pagan districts. The diviner's apparatus consists of the divining strings themselves and a series of marked slabs which serve as a key for interpreting the throws. He receives a small fee—money, rice, or kola-nuts—each time he is consulted, but these payments are regarded as "gifts," and diviners cannot live on what they earn in this way. Most of them are also farmers and some are medicine experts at the same time. The skill is only incidentally hereditary in a family and is generally learned from an expert, payment being made for tuition.

Sand divination (*hati*) is an even more thoroughly learned skill than *eba*, though its performance is less dramatic. The craft can only be acquired by mallams, i.e., men who have at least some rudiments of Moslem learning. The various signs are drawn with the finger-tips on sand smoothed out on the ground. The "key" is carried in the diviner's head, though there is a book on divination written in Arabic which some diviners possess but which they do not consult when actually divining. *Hati* diviners are of widely differing status and learning, but in general the more scholarly mallams do not engage in divination and diviners are often men who have been unsuccessful as mallams.

Witchcraft

754 The Nupe conceive of witchcraft (*ega*) as a supernatural power by which people can be possessed; they then use it for evil and anti-social purposes. It is believed to be practised mainly by women; male witches are said to be "good" people, who would curb the evil desires of the female witches, though the killing of the victim is thought to be the work of both sexes in "partnership."

A witch (*gaci*) is thought to belong to an organization (*ena gaciži*) whose head is known as *lelu*. This title used to be officially bestowed by the Nupe chiefs on a woman who was believed to be the most powerful witch in the village. Her secret knowledge could then be used for the benefit of the community. The equivalent title to-day is that of *sagi*,[12] although a change in the significance of the rank has taken place and the *sagi* is now concerned with more prosaic business.

The powers of a witch are not hereditary but a witch may pass them on to her child by feeding it on witchcraft *cigbe*. A person desiring to become a witch may also approach anyone known to be one and thus gain entry into the circle of witches, or may buy a witchcraft medicine.

Witchcraft is believed capable of making its possessor invisible and of enabling her to recognize other witches; a witch is thought to be fully conscious of her secret powers and does not act against her will. Witches attack people at night when they are asleep and feed on the life force (*rayi*) causing them to fall ill and waste away. Only rarely are they thought to spirit away the body itself.[13]

There are two methods of combating witchcraft. One, applied to individual cases and when a definite person is suspected, consists of an ordeal or other test of guilt, whereupon the witch is heavily fined and expelled from the village. The other is effected through the activities of the *ndakó gboyá*, a "secret" but officially recognized anti-witchcraft society which is applied only when a large-scale outbreak of witchcraft is believed to have occurred. The head of the society (*Maŋŋ Dodo*) comes from a particular lineage of Kusogi Danci, a small riverain village. Initiations take place here, the training lasting five years. Initiates are said to be able to make spirits materialize and to exercise control over witches. Paraphernalia associated with the society include a medicine for ritual washing, a white cloth mask on a pole, and magical objects for producing rain, etc., including the chain of

[12] See above, p. 41.
[13] Nadel, 1935c; 1942, pp. 146–9; 1954a, pp. 163–87.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922

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They are then turned out of the house, but are allowed to live in the vicinity, and continue to receive food and protection in return for whatever work is required of them. There are dependants of both sexes, and the unambitious often prefer to spend their whole lives in this manner. Slaves were treated in much the same manner, and children born in captivity were accounted free.

Motherhood is the great desire of the women, and every New Year the Mallams proclaim which will be the best months in that year for child-bearing. They have a strong belief in a medicine-man called "Soba," who lives in the bush at Lemo, between Bida and Zungeru, and who gives medicines to produce fertility. He is seldom to be found in person, but there are guardians in the bush who act as intermediaries.

When a child is born it is nourished on water, in which the leaves of the Aduruku tree (or the bark and leaves of some seven to ten different kinds of trees, the mixture is termed "dauri") have been boiled for three to seven days. It is poured into their mouths. This continues if the mother's milk is not good, for infants are never given the milk of any animal. After seven days the child is named, and both boys and girls are called after their father and after his father, though their first name be different. They are seldom called after their mother. The aboriginal custom is somewhat different, a girl being named on the eighth, a boy on the ninth day after birth. All the relatives assemble after dawn, certain roots are placed in a pot and beer poured over them. Some is poured as a libation on the ground, the head of the family then drinks some himself, conjuring the good spirit of medicine to protect the child's life, which he designates by name. The guests then consume two pots of beer, and a feast is held with the usual dancing, drumming and singing.

Boys are circumcised by the barber at the age of six or seven, after which they commence working on the farms. When they approach the age of puberty they leave their parents' house, and build themselves a separate hut.*

The eldest child, whether boy or girl, is hated by its parents; they will not look at it, and a large percentage die of neglect. They never call it anything individual, only "boy" or "girl," and the mother would refuse to feed it but that her husband's parents come and live with her for three months to see that she fulfils that duty. Sometimes they take the baby away with them and give it to some wet-nurse, but in no case is the first-born left with its parents after it is weaned. The grandfather always takes it. It has been asserted that the mother will not suckle her first-born child because her milk is unwholesome.

* Sapke and Mokwa.

853 This is tested by an ant (chinaka) being placed therein, and
787 if it drowns the child is given to a wet-nurse and the mother is medically treated. This custom is particularly prevalent amongst riverain Nupe.

855 Subsequent children are thoroughly spoilt until they reach
593 the age of three or four years when, amongst the well-to-do, at all events, the mother is thought to be too fond to make a good guardian. Girls are usually weaned at the age of three years,
[843] boys not until they are four. The children may, therefore, be
855 sent right away to a boarding school for some ten years, or
874 the relations may take them to a day school, arranging their
593 marriages, and in fact divorcing them so entirely from their own parents that the only connection left is inheritance. If the grandfather is alive he distributes the children amongst their uncles and aunts on the male side, generally in order of seniority. They call them father and mother, and when grown-up would visit them and give them money before going to their true parents. The foster-parents would equally go to their foster children for support in their old age, and only to their own children in the last resort.

874 A successful Mallam will have a school containing fifty or sixty children, amongst whom he keeps up a rigid discipline by means of the rod, and if a child attempts to run away it is put into leg-irons. There are whole holidays on Thursdays and Fridays, but on working days the hours are 4 to 6 and 7 to 11 a.m., and 2 to 4 and 7 to 8 p.m. Day scholars miss the first two hours. The children learn the Koran, and reading and writing in Arabic characters, then their own language, and then Haussa; sewing, and at a later stage sums. Boys and girls work and play together, but when girls reach a marriageable age they are taught by the Mallam's wives. There are no regular holidays, and children remain for some ten years without a break. When they leave the school the Mallam
[875] receives a fee of 20,000 cowries, in addition to which there may or may not be complimentary presents given. The young scholar, on reaching home, goes to salute the Sarki and all elders, and receives a dash from each to celebrate the home-coming.

643 The same customs that apply to the commoner apply to the
874 Chiefs and Emirs. His children are also sent to school, and he
855 never keeps his first-born. In questions of marriage it is he
581 who takes the first step, and he will often give his daughters in marriage to the merest talaka, and may even marry a peasant girl himself without incurring reproach.

642 The Emir of Bida keeps up an elaborate state. He sends food to all visitors to his capital and provides them with accommodation. He summons Chiefs to audiences, and holds a levee in the palace courtyard every Friday morning between 7 and 8 a.m., where all or any of his subjects assemble to salute him but he does not enter into conversation with anyone then.

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He may go out to war himself, but more often puts the operations under the War-Chief, Sarkin Yaki, who is himself advised by the Wari-Yaki, a man chosen by the Mallamai for this purpose, and often of so humble a position that the warriors do not know who he is. The Sarkin Yaki, however, obeys him invariably, and indeed it is the Mallamai who direct when and where an attack should be delivered or a retreat made. If the Sarkin Yaki should be killed in war, the army retires to await another appointment by the Emir. It was the custom for the two eldest daughters of the Sarkin Nupe to go to war, each arrayed in two thick rigas, a cummerbund, and carrying a sword and spear. They had large followings, for they gave a big proportion of the spoils to their retinue, but they followed the direction of the Sarkin Yaki. No woman was allowed to accompany them into battle, but many of the sex were discontented with the restriction, and, in consequence, the practice became unpopular amongst the Nupe men. The general feeling became so strong that on the death of the Chief, Umoru Majigi, in 1884, these ladies were no longer allowed to go out to war. Their names were Atiba and Wodiko, names invariably given to the Chief's two eldest daughters. In other respects they lived ordinarily, and were married, but their husbands would never fight in the same war with their wives. Each Chieftain brings his following, and there are bodies of horsemen and footmen, the former armed with spears, the latter with bows and arrows. A war-camp is formed some seven to ten miles from where hostilities are expected to take place, and here the stores and women are left. The Mallamai and a large number of civilian hangers-on advance to the verge of the fight, and wait till success is attained, when they dash in to secure a share of the spoil, the Mallamai giving the word when it is safe to do so. Needless to say their presence is often resented. Envoys may be sent from one army to another in perfect safety, protected by the waving of a white flag, or of green branches; they generally dress in white for additional surety.

Before any campaign is undertaken the Emir consults a Mallam gifted with the power of prophecy, and he says whether the results would be good or bad. A hundred years ago the advent of a fair race from the west was foretold by the prophets in a MS. still extant, and the resistance to their arms was forbidden. That was why the present Emir of Bida and his family, together with all the Mallamai, refused to come out against the British. There are some prophets who are above worldly interest and desire, and others who give advice for 1,000 cowries, or perhaps sixpence. It is a special art in which they receive instruction as youths, and there are books on the subject. The Mallams are consulted on such questions as marriage, trade ventures, and sickness. They look on the ground for about ten minutes and

875 sometimes consult a book before speaking; if it concerns anyone
787 who is absent and unknown to the Mallam, the questioner lays his hand on the ground, at which the Mallam gazes.

In the case of illness the Is-sabi is consulted, as if death is certain it would be mere waste to spend money on doctors and on medicine, as is otherwise done.

759 Some doctors have acquired great reputations, and people travel long distances to consult them. As they are not paid unless they effect a cure, they will not undertake hopeless cases.

764 When a man dies he is buried in the compound in a rectangular-
766 shaped grave, which has three depths, one within the other. The body, which is wrapped in a large new cloth, is laid on a mat on one side in the deepest part, the centre, facing eastwards; wood is placed over it to prevent the earth touching the corpse.
[554] Some of the more important men have a special burial-room in their compound, but with this exception it is the same for men, women, and children. Those who die of small-pox or who commit suicide are, however, taken out and thrown into the bush by dogarai, for no one else will touch them. If a body is being carried home it may never be laid down, so a large number
[184] of bearers are provided to relieve one another. The pagan Nupe pour beer upon the grave, and offer prayers to the spirits.*

765 For seven days after a death the brothers, sons, daughters, and other near relations and friends, come and sit with the bereaved principal from six in the morning till six in the evening. Dirty white clothes constitute mourning apparel, and this is worn for children, parents and spouse.

765 A widower may go out after seven days and work a little,
768 but not much till forty days have elapsed, when he may resume his ordinary habits, though he continues to wear white for five months. Widows, however, remain shut up in the compound for five months, during which time they may not dress their hair, or remove their sandals, or see any man. This over they remarry, and can exercise their own choice as to a groom, being allowed forty days within which to make their arrangements. By the end of this time the law of the country insists on marriage, an old woman getting an old husband, for no one will bury an unmarried woman and, of course, she has no home where she has a right to lie. It is a terror to the widows during their enforced five months of singleness lest they may fall ill or die, for even sickness, following so hard on the tragedy of death, would be considered a sign of evil, and possibly witchdom, so the woman would find difficulty in securing another husband.

768 The heirs are responsible for all debts incurred by the deceased, whose property is divided between his eldest son, his other

* Sapke and Mokwa.